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THE LUTHERANIZATION IN KARELIA AND INGERMANLAND

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Our theme "Early Protestantism and Eastern Europe" may be interpreted in various ways. If we take the title in the wide sense, it can include a consideration of different protest movements enjoying popular support and directed against religious and at times even political oppression. Such forms of Protestantism in Eastern Europe are not unknown. Here we may be reminded of the activities of the Bogomiles in the Balkans, the Hussite movement in Bohemia, or the Judaizers in Russia, all of which were expressions of a form of Protestantism.

We can also, however, restrict our theme of Protestantism to only the reformist movements which shattered the unity of the Western Church in the 16th century and the impact of these movements on conditions in Eastern Europe. The success of the Reformation in Western Europe was not always due to popular support, but owed much to reformism decided on political grounds and often combined with an emergent nationalism. One example of such reformist activities is to be had in the Scandinavian countries, where Lutheran Protestantism largely lacked the support of the people but was introduced through political decisions. The topic I have chosen to speak on here today, the Lutheranization in Karelia and Ingermanland in the first half of the 17th century, has to do with this same sort of political rather than popularly based Protestantism.

Briefly, the historical background of the question of Protestantism in these areas at this time is of course the confrontation between Swedish and Russian expansionist aspirations in this northern part of Europe. The political and economic interests which both Sweden and Russia, primarily through Lord Novgorod the Great, defended in this area led to several centuries of border clashes with varying success for both sides. Toward the end of the 16th century and then during the 17th, the Swedish Empire achieved its greatest eastward expansion. Large territories populated by Russians and Karelians were incorporated into Sweden, and the Swedish state and the Swedish Lutheran Church, which had a monopoly on the practice of religion and popular education, were now forced to formulate a policy with respect to the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox populace. Here it should be remembered that Sweden in the early 17th century was an ethnically and linguistically pluralistic society, so that the Russian-speaking subjects did not in this respect confront the government with any new or unknown

problems. Religiously, however, the Empire was monolithic. The Lutheran Church was the only permitted form of worship, and all citizens were required to embrace its doctrines. The Russian-speaking Orthodox population, therefore, presented a special problem in that it disrupted this religious homogeneity. What, then, was the proper attitude of the Church to Orthodoxy? A debate was conducted on the following questions in the early 17th century: Were the Russians Christians or heathens? In the 15th and 16th centuries political propaganda had often described them as heathens on a par with the Turks and other strange heathen people. If the Russians were Christians, on what points of doctrine did the Lutheran and Orthodox faiths coincide or disagree?

These questions came to play an important role in the theological debate in Sweden during the first two decades of the 17th century. It is interesting to observe here the significant extent to which this religious dispute was influenced by political considerations.

From the political point of view, Sweden and Russia were interested at this time in closer cooperation to counter Catholic Poland. For Sweden it was a question of the legitimacy of the king. King Sigismund III of Poland had also been King of Sweden but had been deposed in 1599. As the son of King John III of Sweden and Princess Katarina Jagellonica of Poland, he could pretend to the thrones of both countries. Polish claims on Muscovy during the Time of Troubles and attempts to install Prince Vladislav as Grand Prince motivated the Swedish government to try to induce the Russians to cooperate against Poland. Swedish propaganda, therefore, pointed to the Catholic peril emanating from Poland and emphasized that the Poles intended to exterminate "the ancient Greek religion". Russians were no longer spoken of as heathens, but Sweden was instead presented as the power which together with Russia could defend Orthodoxy.

Positive statements about Orthodoxy on the part of the political leaders now had to be theologically motivated and defended at home. This task fell to the theologians at Uppsala University. During his visit to the Russian front in 1614, King Gustav II Adolf commissioned two of his court chaplains, the prominent theologians Johannes Rudbeck and Jonas Palma, to investigate the differences between Lutheran and Orthodox doctrine. They studied current literature on the Orthodox Church, attended Russian church services and carried on a theological discussion with the Orthodox clergy of Ivangorod. In August 1614 they submitted to the king their report "A Brief Account and Instruction on our Christian Faith and Church Services in Sweden. Thereto

the Grossest Errors in the Religion of the Russians Presented and Refuted" Although the authors believed that the Russians lived in religious error, they asserted that they were Christians and theoretically close to the Lutheran faith. In certain respects, however, the Russians had been misled, seducti, the most important points of distinction being the worship of icons and the fact that there was no sermon in the Mass.

This report obviously became the foundation of Swedish policy during the decades immediately following the Treaty of Stolbovo in 1617. The Orthodox Russians did not need conversion, but merely had to be instructed to abandon their error. The goal was thus a reformed Orthodoxy. In the summer of 1614 the Uppsala Diocese Synod discussed the question of Orthodox baptism. The matter was brought up by one of the priests of the diocese, who asked whether a Russian Orthodox boy in his congregation should be baptized a Lutheran. This was an important issue, as more and more Russians were immigrating to Sweden at this time. It was evidently concluded that a new baptism was unnecessary. The same conclusion was drawn by a theological dissertation "Theses de questione, utrum Muschovitae sint Christiani?", presented in Uppsala in 1620. The answer to the question of the dissertation was that the Russians were Christians, and that therefore no new baptism was necessary if they converted to Lutheranism. Behind this point of view one senses the desires of the political leaders, who were unwilling openly to challenge the Russians in the religious question by demanding the mass baptism of Orthodox subjects in Karelia and Ingermanland. The religious issue was given additional urgency by another political question. In 1611-13 negotiations were held between Russia, represented by Novgorod, and Sweden concerning the succession to the Russian throne. Novgorod, which since July 1611 had been occupied by Swedish troops, had concluded an agreement pledging support for the election of a Swedish prince as Tsar of Russia. First this was to have been Gustav Adolf himself, but after his succession to the Swedish throne following the death of his father Karl IX, the prime candidate became Duke Karl-Filip, his mere twelve-year-old brother. The Novgorod delegations to the negotiations first in Stockholm and then in Viborg in 1613 had one definite demand, namely that the candidate to the throne convert to Orthodoxy. This demand was rejected just as firmly by the Swedes, who attempted to show the Russians that the Lutheran and Orthodox doctrines were in fact very close to one another. As part of this persuation campaign we may view the fact that the Swedes presented Archimandrite Cyprian, leader of the Novgorod delegation in Viborg, with a copy of

Luther's Small Cathechism with commentaries in Russian. In a letter to the translator, the Swedish delegation interpreter Hans Flörich, Cyprian expressed his gratitude for the book, declaring that he found it valuable even if he did not understand everything in it. In this letter he expresses a desire for the Lutheran Church Handbook and a Gospel book as well, so that the secrets of the Lutheran faith may be known to the Russians.

The Swedish political and ecclesiastical leaders obviously proceeded very cautiously in the religious question before 1617. They made every effort to minimize differences and strongly emphasized everything that united Lutheranism and Orthodoxy. It is evident that not all Swedish theologians approved of this policy. Especially as long as it was hoped that a Swedish prince could be installed as Grand Prince of Russia or at least as Prince of Novgorod, there were also hopes of introducing Lutheranism into Russia. Such aspirations were first expressed in a pamphlet entitled "Tragoedia Demetrico-Moscovitica", published in Rostock in 1614 by the German priest Matthias Schaumius, who had at one time served as a field chaplain in the Swedish army in Russia. The pamphlet deals with the activities of the false Dmitry that had motivated the Swedish military intervention in Northern Russia. As other goals of Swedish policy he mentions the conversion of Russia to Lutheranism under the leadership of the Swedish Duke Karl-Filip, and civilizing the country and transforming it into a Western state by means of an extensive educational program. Schaumius's pamphlet was doubtless meant first of all to serve Swedish propaganda in Northern Germany, but it is not inconceivable that it also expressed hopes that were shared by many political and ecclesiastical authorities in Sweden. I want to stress, however, that nothing in the official policy suggests that these ambitions were as far-reaching as Schaumius claims.

The Treaty of Stolbovo in 1617 set a limit on Swedish eastward expansion. For nearly a century Sweden was allowed to retain the province of Kexholm in Karelia and Ingermanland. The treaty also regulated the religious rights of the people, but it does not contain any clear stipulations of freedom of worship for the Orthodox population. The nobility, townsmen and monks were allowed to move to Russia, but this right was not extended to peasants and parish priests. We may thus assume that the intention was to allow the Orthodox population to practice their religion. The diocese of Viborg was created in 1618 for the ecclesiastical administration of Kexholm province and Ingermanland. The royal instruction to the new Bishop of Viborg contains a number of guidelines for the church policy to be persued. The bishop was

to appoint Lutheran priests in Ingermanland and Karelia who could gain the confidence of the Orthodox populace and through instruction and exhortation guide them away from their error. Lutheran churches were also to be built. The position of the Orthodox priests was a difficult question. They refused to accept the Lutheran bishop as their leader but insisted that they answered to the Archbishop of Novgorod. The latter for his part energetically asserted the rights of the Orthodox Church and population, and his communications to the Orthodox clergy in Karelia and Ingermanland were regarded by the Swedish authorities as calls to rebellion.

The Swedes forbade Orthodox priests candidates to travel to Novgorod to be ordained. At the same time many priests defied the ban on moving to Russia, which resulted in an impoverishment of Orthodox religious activity. Thus in Ingermanland, for example, there were 48 Orthodox churches in 1630 but only 17 Orthodox priests. At the same time there were 8 Lutheran churches with 6 priests. To meet the religious needs of the populace and provide for their Christian training the leaders of the Viborg diocese attempted to place Lutheran priests in the vacant Orthodox congregations. They also tried within the dicese to train Swedish and Finnish youths as priests, and here the recently established elementary schools in Kexholm, Nyenskans and Narva, and the gymnasiums of Viborg and Narva had an important function. We know that there were also attempts to recruit Russian-speaking pupils to these schools, and that other pupils, who did not speak Russian, were encouraged to learn the language, by royal scholarships, among other measures. The Swedish authorities also studied the question on creating an Orthodox diocese in Karelia and Ingermanland and had some contacts with the Patriarch of Constantinopol on that question. But when in 1638 a monk appeared with credentials, introductions and passport from the Patriarch and from the Metropolite in Kiev to become bishop of Karelia and Ingermanland, he was taken into prison, first in Ivangorod and then in Åbo.

As I mentioned above, the Swedish policy toward the Orthodox populace was not to convert them but rather to re-educate them to abandon their errors. This was the same principle being applied in other parts of the Swedish Empire. It was felt that extensive instruction in the Lutheran faith would train the people to become good citizens. Lutheran doctrine was summarized in the Small Catechism with explanations, and the entire people was to learn its contents. Each year the priests would examine everyone to make sure they knew the book by heart. For the purposes of this

instruction numerous editions of the catechism in various languages were published in Sweden in the first half of the 17th century. A Russian printing press was set up in Stockholm in 1625 to supply the book to the priests of Karelia and Ingermanland in their native language. In his royal proclamation establishing the press King Gustav Adolf writes: "We Gustav Adolf etc. do hereby make known that since Almighty God has graciously vouchsafed us Russian subjects, and since we do endeavor to see that they may come to the right knowledge of the Christian faith, then we have recently had made some Russian type for the printing of books in the Russian tongue".

And so Luther's Catechism was printed in Russian in 1628. According to the royal instructions, all Biblical quotes were to agree with the text of the Church Slavonic Bible, but Luther's explanations were to be translated into vernacular Russian.

There is another catechism in Russian with a parallel Swedish text from the 1630s which is often called Alfabetum Ruthenorum. Beside the canonical part of the catechism, this edition also contains the Cyrillic alphabet with notes on the pronunciation of the letters and reading exercises of the type one finds in all Primers of this period. This book was doubtless intended as a textbook for instruction in Russian at the recently established seminaries in the Viborg diocese.

In the 1640s Luther's Catechism was printed at the same press in Stockholm in Finnish (Karelian) but with Cyrillic characters, and was intended for the population of Karelia. These books, of course, were meant to be used by the priests in their instruction of the people. We know from preserved communications from priests in the Viborg diocese that the catechism has also existed in other translations.

The Count Per Brahe, who was a member of the State Council and Governor of Finland, suggested that rewards should be given to orthodox priests studying the Lutheran Catechism. When Brahe in 1640 visited Kexholm he rewarded 13 people, priests, djaks and their sons, which had learnt to read the Catechism. In his report to the State Council the same year Brahe says that "he has not suspended the orthodox priests, but with encouraging words and rewards persuaded them to read the Catechism"

This deliberate policy of educating the people in Lutheranism to persuade them to abandon the error, particularly icon worship, which the Swedes perceived in the Orthodox faith, however, encountered stubborn

resistance. The orthodox populace, which was forced to attend services in the Lutheran churches, where the sermon was an important ingredient in religious instruction, attempted by all available means to combat Lutheranization. The following episode from 1642 is illustrative. At the court of Kronoborg on Lake Ladoga, a Lutheran, formerly Orthodox, priest was accused of causing a Russian boy's blindness through his instruction in Luther's Catechism. The boy had been with the priest only a few months for instruction in the ABC book and the Catechism and had suddenly gone blind. The orthodox populace was firmly convinced that the affliction had been caused by Lutheran heresies. It is easy to understand how such incidents reinforced the people's resistance to instruction in the Lutheran faith.

When after a couple of decades it became clear that the policy of instruction and upbringing was not producing the desired results, Swedish policy hardened successively in the 1640s and assumed more and more compulsive features. The inhabitants of Ivangorod protested to Queen Kristina of Sweden that they were not allowed to practice their religion freely, and demanded that the Swedish authorities observe the rights guaranteed the townspeople by the peace treaty of 1617. In Karelia the situation seems to have become aggravated especially in the 1650s. In the years 1654-1658 there was a mass exodus of Orthodox inhabitants, over 4000 families fleeing to Russia. We are justified in assuming that religious oppression was an important contributing factor. In the 1660s the Russian Patriarch prohibited all Orthodox believers from reading the Lutheran catechism. Towards the end of this century there was a new attemp to activate instruction in Lutheran doctrine. The Swedish superintendent (bishop) in Narva, Johannes Bergius, ordered a new Russian edition of Luther's Catechism. It was published with parallel texts in Swedish and Russian, the Russian text in the Latin alphabet. This catechism was intended for the Swedish-speaking clergy in Ingermanland, who even with no knowledge of Russian would be able to teach their Russian parishioners and examine their knowledge of Lutheran doctrine.

By the Treaty of Nystad in 1721 Sweden ceded the eastern provinces that had already been incorporated in Peter the Great's Russian Empire for nearly two decades. A summarizing evaluation of this century of trying to Lutheranize Karelia and Ingermanland leads us to the conclusion that such attempts to convince the Orthodox populace by means of instruction and upbringing were a total failure. One important reason was doubtless the incorrect

notion that only insignificant details distinguished the Orthodox faith from Lutheran doctrine, and that instruction could persuade the populace to abandon what were deemed to be the errors of Orthodoxy. The Lutheran theologians were no doubt right when they said that theological discrepancies were not very great. What they failed to understand, however, was that for the people it was not theology but rather the Orthodox Mass and the icons that were of crucial significance to the pious life. Forcing the Orthodox populace to attend Lutheran services to listen to sermons that sometimes lasted for hours must have had a negative effect.